

**San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board**

*(Sent via email: [walsh.linsey@epa.gov](mailto:walsh.linsey@epa.gov))*

October 8, 2018  
File: CW-803476 and CW-717712

Ms. Linsey Walsh  
Office of Pesticide Programs Docket  
Regulatory Public Docket Center (28221T)  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)  
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW.  
Washington, DC 20460-0001

Subject: Dichlobenil – Proposed Interim Registration Review Decision  
(EPA-HQ-OPP-2012-0395)

Dear Ms. Walsh:

Please accept these comments on the proposed interim registration review decision for the herbicide and root control chemical, dichlobenil. The San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board (Water Board) is the California State agency responsible for restoring, maintaining, and protecting the beneficial uses of surface and ground waters in the San Francisco Bay Region. To protect waters within our jurisdiction, we issue federal NPDES permits to about 50 wastewater treatment systems and over 100 stormwater agencies. These permits require wastewater agencies (also known as publicly owned treatment works, or “POTWs”) to prevent collection system blockages and untreated sewage spills. Tree roots are the leading cause of collection system blockages, and dichlobenil is widely used to control tree root intrusion in wastewater collection systems. Consequently, the Water Board is especially interested in the registration review decision for dichlobenil.

The Water Board appreciates and supports U.S. EPA’s proposed dichlobenil label instruction language, particularly in requiring applicators to take three specific actions: (1) to notify downstream POTWs prior to the start of dichlobenil application, (2) to report to POTW operators the quantity of dichlobenil applied to the collection system, and (3) to inform POTW operators about the risk of treatment process interference from high dichlobenil concentrations entering their facility. However, because of the potential safety hazards dichlobenil poses to POTW workers who enter the collection systems and the risk of interference with wastewater treatment operations, as U.S. EPA noted in its proposed decision, the Water Board recommends a minor but meaningful revision to the proposed label language. The label instructions should explicitly require that notification to POTWs are made at least 24 hours prior to dichlobenil applications to wastewater collection systems. Adding the 24-hour advance to the notification requirements would provide adequate time for POTW operators to prepare for and avoid health hazards and

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treatment process interferences. The Water Board also fully concurs with the comments on the proposed dichlobenil registration review decision submitted by the California Association of Stormwater Quality Agencies (CASQA) and the Bay Area Clean Water Agencies (BACWA).

### **Requested Modifications to Dichlobenil POTW Notification Label Instructions**

The Water Board's suggested revisions to the dichlobenil label instructions are shown below in bold:

*"This product must be used only where wastewater treated for root control will be processed through a wastewater treatment facility. Applicators must notify downstream wastewater treatment facilities **at least 24 hours** prior to the start of dichlobenil applications. **This is** so that they **can restrict staff from entering downstream collection system lines and** ~~may~~ monitor the operations of the wastewater treatment plant. Applicators must report how much product will be applied to the sewage system to operators of downstream water treatment plants and ~~to~~ inform these operators that high concentrations of these chemicals in wastewater may adversely affect the biological sewage breakdown process in wastewater treatment plants."*

### **POTW Notification Should Require at least 24 Hours Prior to Application**

A minimum of 24 hours between notification to POTWs and the start of dichlobenil application is essential to provide adequate time for POTW operators to ensure their safety and operational integrity of their treatment plants. U.S. EPA's proposed language allows for as little as a few minutes between POTW notification and dichlobenil application. With less than a 24-hour notice, it is possible that workers could already be in the collection system when the dichlobenil application occurs, or that POTW operators would not have sufficient time to prepare their operations for an influx of dichlobenil to their biological treatment units. Labels for other root control pesticides will also require a 24-hour advanced notification to the downstream POTW.<sup>1</sup>

### **POTW Notification Should Mention Worker Safety**

Due to the health risks associated with direct exposure to dichlobenil treatment solutions, it is imperative that workers do not open and enter manholes in areas undergoing dichlobenil treatment. Because of the extensive lengths of treatment zones, chemical applicators would be unable to view all manholes affected by dichlobenil treatment. Therefore, it is not possible to guarantee worker safety through visual measures alone. Due to the paramount importance of POTWs to ensure the safety of their workers, the Water Board urges U.S. EPA to revise the proposed label instructions to prevent workers from entering manholes and the collection system in and downstream from treatment areas.

The Water Board thanks the U.S. EPA for its current label proposal and for the opportunity for the Water Board to offer additional input to emphasize the need for requiring explicit

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<sup>1</sup> See the Diquat Dibromide Proposed Interim Registration Review Decision, Case Number 0288, September 2016 (EPA-HQ-OPP-2009-0846)

San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board  
Dichlobenil Comment Letter

advanced-notice to protect worker safety and wastewater treatment integrity. The Water Board appreciates the important work the Office of Pesticide Programs does through the pesticide registration review process. For any questions, please contact James Parrish at [james.parrish@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:james.parrish@waterboards.ca.gov) or (510) 622.2381 as needed.

Sincerely,



James Parrish  
Environmental Scientist

cc: *via email:*

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